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Content Validity Analysis of the Master Program in TEFL

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Abstract

The study was to investigate the content validity of the General English section of the M.A. entrance examination of TEFL at Islamic Azad University. To reach this, the questions of the exam were analysed by the item content congruence and applicability questionnaire of Brown (2008). There was also a panel of experts who were to decide about the representativeness of the exam and the provided reading list. The content validity of the exam showed that the exam enjoys a moderate and very good content validity in different sections. To support this statement, the representativeness results also were used.

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1. Introduction

Entrance Examination (EE) as an important aspect of today's educational system needs to be considered in various issues including testing principles. The importance of entrance exam is increasing day to day to make the process of admission more transparent, especially in some type of universities in Iran. The exam qualify only those students who will manage to pass it on with high grades, and this admission procedure is based on norm-referenced

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testing in which the norm of getting accepted is gaining a higher score. To make ascertain of the best performance in the EE, the candidate needs to be aware of questions, syllabuses, pattern, mode and nature of exam. The eligibility task in such exams is easy. It is enough to make right choice of questions and to avoid the negative marking.

Islamic Azad University (IAU) is headquartered in Tehran, and was founded in 1982. It currently has an enrollment of 1.5 million students. This huge number of enrollments has made the university as the world's third largest university. IAU has over 400 branches across the country and in other countries, including Tasmania, Lebanon, Armenia, U.A.E, United Kingdom and in near future in Malaysia, Canada, and Afghanistan. Ministry of science and higher education recognizes the certificates issued by this university.

Even though many studies have been conducted on the testing issues of entrance examinations in Iran, no study has mentioned the probable problems of the IAUEE (especially in TEFL). The research studies done in the past twenty years or so indicate that the shortcomings of university entrance examination in Iran are abundant. The researcher can refer to the investigations of Yarmohammadi in 1986 in which he indicates the problems of the entrance examination in state universities in Iran are huge. Also Farhadi in 1985 analyzed the exams of 1983 to 1985 and found little correspondence between the manners the materials are taught to the students and the manner students are tested on them. Jafarpur in (1986) and in another study in (1996) critically reviewed the TEFL M.A. Entrance Examination of State Universities and concluded, "the validity of the exam is under question due to the problems related to the items in terms of testing principles" (p.20). Razmjoo (2006) mentioned "the university entrance examinations held in the last two decades are frequently criticized as being invalid and not standard with lots of problems" (p.75).

2. Methodology

2.1. Procedure and Instrumentation

In order to investigate the content validity of the study the researcher used item content congruence and applicability questionnaire of Brown published in 2008. The reason of using this questionnaire was based on its accessibility to the researcher. The questionnaire had four main sections to check item content congruence and applicability of the structure, cloze passage, and vocabulary and reading section. There were also four subsections to this questionnaire which were asking about the existing one to one correspondence between students' proficiency level and the questions of IAUEE, form of items, and content of items. The answers were based on Likert scale of poor, moderate, and very good. The reason for using the 5-degree Likert scale questionnaire was to provide more objective answers to the questions. The questionnaire was e-mailed to 14 English language doctors who were experts in the field of general English and had the experience of teaching at IAU for at least three years.

It wasn't necessary to distribute among such a large group, but it was a volunteer questionnaire and some may not decide to participate in the study. The receivers of the questionnaire had a three working day time limitation in order to answer the questionnaires. They were asked to notify the researcher if there are not willing to participate.

3. Results of the Study

The collected questionnaires were analyzed in terms of frequency to decide about the Likert scale. The frequency results showed that the overall match between the item, and the objective, which is meant to test in the structure section, was very good, while in cloze passage section, vocabulary, and reading comprehension was moderate. Also the results showed that with regards to the match between objective and the related materials that they teach, in structure section this matching relation is very good, while in other sections was moderate.

Before running these frequencies, the sample representativeness of the IAU exam was analyzed. The panel of the experts agreed that in comparing and contrasting the provided reading list of the M.A. EE of TEFL with the provided questions of the EE, the structure, and vocabulary section were the most representative of all in terms of the match between the provided reading list and the distributed questionnaires.

4. Conclusion

The content validity of the exam showed that the exam enjoys a moderate and very good content validity in different sections. For example, in the structure section the overall match between the item, and the objective, which is meant to test, was very good. To support this statement, the representativeness results of the section also showed that nearly all of the questions in this section are representative of the reading lists in which students were supposed to study. In contrast, the exam enjoys a moderate content validity in the reading comprehension, vocabulary, and

[illegible]

Comment

Proficiency level match

80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Comment

Content Applicability (For Reading Section= Question 80 to 100)

Match between the objective and related materials that you teach

80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Comment

Match between the item and the related material that you teach

80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Comment